



## MISSOURI SENATE

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# Senator John Cauthorn Gives a Golden Goose Egg to State's Insurance Department

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*Taxpayers Pick Up Tab for State Workers' Festive Southwest Junket*

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Scottsdale, Arizona. Nothing like it in all the world. Take it from the home page of Scottsdale's convention and visitors bureau website:

*"The perfect place to bring your passion for life! From luxurious resorts and championship golf to pampering spas and a vibrant arts and cultural scene, you'll find all the outlets you need to embrace life with wild abandon..."*

Also the perfect place for not-so-budget-conscious leaders at Missouri's Department of Insurance (MDI) to send nearly 30 agency employees for a three-day land cruise last July. And thus, we have Senator John Cauthorn, R-Mexico, all but forced to bestow a Golden Goose Egg on the heads of the insurance department for seeing a poor idea all the way through to the \$25,000 bitter, bloated end.

"Most state agencies got the memo that our expenses are outpacing revenues and that travel should be kept to a bare minimum," Cauthorn, chair of the Senate's Governmental Accountability and Fiscal Oversight Committee, said. "Well, the insurance department might have got the memo, but they sure aren't taking it very seriously – not the best strategy when you and the other 11 departments are set to go before the Legislature during budget appropriations hearings."

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*“We are pleased to confirm your attendance at the July 27-29, 2003, Career Development Seminar...,”* the Insurance Regulatory Examiners Society wrote MDI last year. Shortly thereafter, the agency had nearly as many people as there are state senators in the air and off to Scottsdale’s Hyatt Gainey Ranch Resort.

“The final cost of this taxpayer-underwritten field trip may never be known,” Cauthorn said. “But we do know that, with items like room charges of \$150 a night, at least \$24,800 was spent in the desert.”

Cauthorn noted that Missouri’s vast seminar delegation, comprising nearly 7 percent of all attendees, was by far the largest dispatched by any state. Only two other states sent more than eight people, with host state Arizona sending a full dozen less than Missouri’s 29 lucky all-expenses-paid wanderers.

“If one works well, 29 must work even better,” Cauthorn said, trying to recreate the thought process apparently driving MDI’s top brass. “And this from the agency put in place to oversee insurance coverage accessibility and affordability – very encouraging.”

Cauthorn began giving out Golden Goose Eggs to various state agencies and elected officeholders last year as a way to highlight the seemingly inexhaustible instances of governmental ineptitude. Previous winners include a fellow senator, the state’s treasurer and, on more than one occasion, the governor.

“Now the insurance department goes in the egg crate of shame,” Cauthorn said. “When temperatures soar over the 100-degree mark by sunup, off to the sage-covered hills of Arizona goes a regiment of taxpayer-paid staffers. And with them, like a mirage, goes 25 thousand dollars of the taxpayers’ money.”



*“The desert oasis at Hyatt Regency Scottsdale Resort at Gainey Ranch offers a 2.5-acre ‘water playground,’ water slide, sand beach, tennis, championship golf, Sonwai Spa and Camp Hyatt Kachina...”*